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But, in the next place, we feel that it would be wrong for us to dissuade men from earnest religious inquiry, even were it in our power. It would only be a narrow and selfish mind which could deliberately profess entire indifference whether others thought rightly or wrongly on the subject of religion. If a man were in a ship in a storm, and were to say to himself—Provided I can get safe to shore, I care not whether all my fellow-passengers are swallowed up in the ocean—would not such a man be shunned, as a cold, heartless wretch? And is eternal happiness of less value than preservation from temporal danger? Can any one who has experienced in his own mind the consoling influence of well-grounded trust and confidence in God, remain indifferent while he sees those around him still exposed to all the evils of doubt and uncertainty—tossed back and forwards between conflicting opinions—unable to believe one religion—unwilling to adopt another? Will he not rather be anxious, in a kindly and Christian spirit, to remove these doubts, so far as he can, and direct the inquirer to the true source of light and knowledge—to those Holy Scriptures which are given by inspiration of God, and which are able to make men wise unto salvation?

It is in this spirit, and with these feelings, that we commence the following pages, which we intend shall be mainly (though not exclusively) devoted to the consideration of some of the prominent religious questions on which the opinions of our countrymen are now so much divided. It is our hope, with God's blessing, to bring together facts and arguments taken from the best and most trustworthy authorities; and to comment on them in a spirit of fairness and candour. We shall gladly open our columns to communications from all quarters, which we may conceive it useful or desirable that the public should be made acquainted with, provided they be written in a Christian spirit, and free from everything savouring of bitterness or angry feeling; for it is our firm determination that our paper shall contain nothing, at which even the prejudices of those who do not agree with us, can justly take offence. We see no reason why religious discussions cannot be carried on in a kindly spirit of mutual regard. We are persuaded that there are many good and estimable men, arrayed at opposite sides, in the great struggle which is going on around us. Frail men will always be prone to think differently; but that is no argument why each party should not exert the reason which God has given him in the search for truth. On the contrary, it is rather an additional motive for each person to endeavour to satisfy his own mind, that the views which he himself holds, or professes to hold, are the true ones. When opinions are diametrically opposite, it is clear that only one party can be right; and it is then of vital consequence that a man should not only be persuaded himself of the truth, but be able to give a reason for his belief. But there are other points of minor importance, on which men may lawfully differ. And there is one beneficial result which is sure to follow from calm and sober discussion, that each party will at least know what opinions his opponent really entertains, and will not attribute to him errors which possibly never crossed his mind. There are several doctrines of the utmost importance in religion, which all sincere Roman Catholics and Protestants hold in common. These may with truth be called Catholic* (*i.e.*, universal) opinions,

being such as every believer in Divine revelation has held, since the time of our Lord and his apostles, and whereby Christians are now distinguished from Turks or Hindoos. Thus, even where men do not agree in convincing their opponents, each party will be more likely to appreciate the other's motives, and perceive the strength of the arguments on which he relies; and instead of setting him down as a blind, unreasoning bigot, he will concede to him the same liberty and freedom of judgment which he claims for himself.

But it may be said—Why not leave religious discussions to the clergy, whose duty and profession it is to examine into these matters? Questions of law are decided by the lawyers and judges; doctors and medical men are alone competent to decide upon the nature of diseases: why, then, should laymen trouble their heads with controversial theology? Admitting that there may be some truth in these analogies, we beg leave to differ from the conclusion which they are brought forward to support. If a man believed himself to be heir to a property, common curiosity, to say the least, would induce him to take some pains to examine into the validity of his title; and, so far as his circumstances permitted, he would naturally like to know all the facts, and at least the principal authorities which might be brought forward in support of his claim. If one lawyer said he was the rightful heir, and another lawyer was of an opposite opinion, he would seek to know what their reasons were, and why it was that they differed; and he would, therefore, lose no opportunity of acquiring the requisite information. Again, if a man was sick, and heard two doctors disputing by his bedside, as to the nature of his disease and the best mode of treatment to be used, a due regard to his own health, and anxiety for a speedy recovery, would prompt him to ask them some reasons for their different opinions; and he would not be satisfied with bare, naked assertions on either side. There are, doubtless, a great many subjects on which we must trust to the opinion of others: but every sensible and prudent man will like to know, for his own sake, *whom* he is to trust, and *why*. And his inquiries will be more anxiously made, in proportion to the importance of the matter about which he is engaged. If a merchant embarks all his property in any speculation; or, if a farmer devotes all the savings of his life to the purchase of a farm in the Incumbered Estates' Court, both parties will make very sharp inquiries before their minds are finally made up: they will endeavour to satisfy their own minds, that they are acting like wise and sensible men; and they will not take a leap in the dark, because Mr. A. or Mr. B. orders them to do so. And, surely, where the important interests of the soul are concerned—when eternal happiness is at stake, men ought, at least, to show the same anxiety which they do about their temporal concerns. If, indeed, all the clergy, and all the doctors, and all the lawyers, were of one way of thinking, and agreed about everything relating to their respective callings, the whole question would be settled at once, and it would be useless for plain, unlettered persons to attempt to differ from them. But further, there is an additional reason which should induce Catholic laymen to satisfy their own minds upon religious points, that many of the clergy who claim the right of controlling their opinions, have shown a manifest

of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, in their co-equal majesty and triune Godhead, according to apostolic teaching and Gospel doctrine), *shall adopt the name of Catholic Christians.*" And the language of the Athanasian creed (which is one of the authorized formularies of the Church of Rome) is equally clear and explicit—"This is the Catholic faith, that we worship one God in Trinity, and Trinity in Unity." If the voice of antiquity, therefore, is to be heard, Roman Catholics cannot reasonably deny the title of Catholic to all who are sincere believers in the doctrine of the Trinity.

reluctance to give any help or assistance to their flocks; and we believe that this reluctance arises from a very obvious cause—viz., that, whether from lack of learning, or ability, they are *unable* to solve the doubts and difficulties of those who have recourse to their advice. We cannot help doubting the fact, that *all* Irish priests are themselves thoroughly educated in the higher departments of either religious knowledge or theological learning; and we suspect that their lack of argument is not unfrequently the cause of *some* of them so freely resorting to the curse and the blow. The anathema is, after all, a very sorry argument, and a mode rather of silencing than convincing those who entertain doubts to be removed or difficulties to be solved. In a free country, where the cry of "religious liberty" has become as familiar as a household word, it is in vain to shut one's eyes to the impossibility of confining educated and intelligent men within the narrow limits of priestly authority. Such vassalage may have suited an age when the masses of the laity could not read, and were necessarily at the command of those whose superior learning placed them on vantage ground. Far be it from us to diminish the legitimate influence of such superior qualities. We shall ever be anxious to do honour to any body of men whose lives and arguments do honour to their profession, even when we may, on what we think sound reasoning, differ from them in belief, or fail to be convinced by their reasons or authorities; but against the tyranny, the selfishness, the covetousness of ignorant men, we shall fearlessly protest and struggle, even though they affect to be armed with power from the Vatican, and are actually armed with the power of the rabble. We must, and will, strive to assert the freedom of the Irish laity from a galling yoke, which neither we nor our forefathers have been able to bear. We will not bow our heads under that yoke, nor fail to encourage others to assert their mutual independence of the mere priesthood or its assumptions. Difficult may be our path, but we shall not struggle alone, nor fail in securing the sympathy of all who have smarted and suffered under priestly thralldom. The right of educated men to study the Holy Scriptures, the fathers of the church, the decrees of the councils or ecclesiastical history, can no more be denied than their right to acquire secular learning. If the laity may read them, the laity must strive to understand them. We venture to think—and hope to be able to show practical and substantial proofs—that they can succeed in understanding them. If we go wrong, let those more learned correct us, whether clergy or laymen. We shall ever be open to correction or just reproof, but shall expect the same candour and fair play which we intend and undertake to accord to others. We hope, too, to conduct our pages like gentlemen as well as Catholic laymen. Whatever reaches us, written with such objects and in such temper, we shall gladly aid in circulating from whatever quarter it may come; but mere polemic strife, or vulgar declamation, or personal scurrility, will find no favour, and, we hope, no example, in our pages.

WHAT IS TRUTH?

"WHAT is truth?" said jesting Pilate, and would not stay for a reply. The great Lord Bacon wrote an essay upon this text, which goes far to prove that the love of truth is as rare a distinction as it is a happy and a glorious one.

Had it been otherwise, and Adam had not sinned, possibly mankind had not needed that a Divine Redeemer should have come into the world to bear witness unto the truth.

"To this end," said Christ to Pilate, "was I born; and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice."—John xviii. 37.

"Pilate said unto him, What is truth? and when

(*) Anciently, in the fourth century, all believers in the doctrine of the Trinity were entitled to the name of Catholic. (Vide Cod. Just. lib. I. tit. 1.)—"Hanc legem (*i.e.*, qui secundum Apostolicam disciplinam Evangelicamque doctrinam, Patris et Filii et Spiritus Sancti unam deitatem sub pari majestate et sub pia Trinitate credunt) sequentes, Christianorum Catholicorum nomen jubemus amplecti." "We order that all who follow this rule (that is, who believe in the Deity

he had said this he went out again unto the Jews, and saith unto them, I find in him no fault at all."

Had Pilate waited for a reply, what answer would he have received? Possibly the same as that given to the woman of Samaria, who, pleading for the worship of her fathers, said to him, "Our fathers worshipped in this mountain, and ye say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship." "Woman, believe me the hour cometh when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. The hour cometh when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth, for the Father seeketh such to worship him. GOD IS A SPIRIT; AND THEY THAT WORSHIP HIM MUST WORSHIP HIM IN SPIRIT AND IN TRUTH."

All religions profess to afford God the worship of the heart. Any other would be an insolent mockery. All religions also profess to be led by the Spirit of God.

"Because I have spoken those things," says the Saviour (John xvi. 6.), "sorrow hath filled your hearts; but I will tell you the truth, it is expedient to you that I go, for if I go not the Paraclete (the Comforter) will not come to you; but if I go I will send him to you. I have yet many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now; but when He the Spirit of Truth is come, he will teach you all truth."—John xvi. 13 (Douay Bible).

How, then, is this teaching to be secured, and what does it teach? On this do men greatly differ, and probably ever will, until the commands of St. Paul to Timothy are more generally obeyed. "I charge thee, before God and Jesus Christ, who shall judge the living and the dead by his coming and his kingdom, Preach the word: be instant in season, out of season; reprove, exhort, rebuke in all patience and doctrine. For there shall be a time when they will not endure sound doctrine: but according to their own desires, they will heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and will, indeed, turn away their hearing from the truth, and will be turned unto fables."—2 Tim. iv. 1.

As laymen, however, we must not sermonize; and, therefore, return to Lord Bacon, whose admiration for truth, and success in discovering it, have stamped his name with immortality. "The poet saith excellently well, it is a pleasure to stand upon the shore, and to see ships tossed upon the sea; a pleasure to stand in the window of a castle, and to see a battle and the adventures thereof below; but no pleasure is comparable to the standing upon the vantage-ground of truth (a hill not to be commanded, and where the air is always clear and serene), and to see the errors and wanderings, and mists and tempests in the vale below, so that this prospect be seen with pity not with pride. Certainly it is heaven upon earth to have a man's mind move in charity, rest in Providence, and turn upon the poles of truth; and however things may be, in some men's depraved judgments and assertions, yet truth, which only doth judge itself, teacheth that the INQUIRY OF TRUTH, which is the love-making or wooing of it; THE KNOWLEDGE OF TRUTH, which is the presence of it; and the BELIEF OF TRUTH, which is the enjoying of it, is the sovereign good of human nature. The first creation of God, in the works of his days, was the light of the sense, the last was the light of reason, and his Sabbath work ever since is the illumination of his Spirit. First he breathed light upon the face of matter or chaos, then he breathed light into the face of man, and still he breatheth and inspirith light into the face of his chosen."

"Awake thou that sleepest and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light."—Ephes. v. 14. If we can be instrumental, in ever so humble a degree, in leading others to see the true light more clearly than they have yet done, we shall not have written in vain; and even should we therein fail, we shall still not be without our reward, if we be ourselves led by the Spirit of Truth into a more clear and full light. The love of truth, we incline to think, claims alliances much with the heart as with the head; no vicious man was ever a lover of it. Our reasoning faculties were not given us for the exercise of whim or fancy, but to be the active instruments of guiding us to both truth and happiness. We hold it to be a pernicious practice to enter into disputations merely for the sake of argument. Such a course, if continued long, would make a man insensible to truth, and unninge the whole fabric of his mind. This we shall attempt to avoid; and shall ever be more anxious to agree with others than to differ, where we can do so without sacrificing truth. If we can thereby assist any of our fellow-countrymen to make progress in real knowledge, and clear away some, at least, of the clouds of prejudice which hang over the opinions of men who have not taken the pains to cultivate their reason, and steadily employ it in the pursuit of truth, we shall not have lived or rolled our tub altogether in vain.

A GLASS EYE.—An Emir had bought a left eye of a glass-maker, supposing that he would be able to see with it. The man begged him to give it a little time: he could not expect that it would see, all at once, as well as the right eye, which had been for so many years in the habit of it.—*Coleridge*.

ERIN MAVOURNEEN.

Remember thee! yes, while there's life in this heart,
It shall never forget thee, all lorn as thou art;
More dear in thy sorrow, thy gloom, and thy showers,
Than the rest of the world in their sunniest hours.

Wert thou all that I wish thee—great, glorious, and free,
First flower of the earth and first gem of the sea—
I might hail thee with prouder, with happier brow;
But, oh! could I love thee more deeply than now?

No! thy chains as they rattle thy blood as it runs,
But make thee more painfully dear to thy sons—
Whose hearts, like the young of the desert-bird's nest,
Drink love in each life-drop that flows from thy breast.

THOMAS MOORE.

THE ISLE OF SAINTS.

THERE is a melancholy pleasure in looking back upon the past greatness of times long gone; and surely there is no feature in the ancient history of our beloved but unhappy country, on which a true Irishman can dwell with such interest and pride, as the singular reputation for learning, and advancement in Christian knowledge, which, in the first ages after the introduction of Christianity, won for it the name of *Insula Sanctorum*—the Isle of Saints. According to the concurrent and unanimous testimony of ancient writers, the Irish people were then so eminent for the study of philosophy and letters, and more especially of the Sacred Scriptures; the country was so thickly studded with schools, colleges, and religious establishments, that students from all parts flocked to it in great numbers, to prosecute both general and theological knowledge. The causes of the preference then given to an Irish education were not only the strict discipline observed in the schools of Ireland, and the knowledge of Holy Scriptures, possessed by our old divines, but the character they maintained for ability in instructing others in it. We shall have other opportunities of adducing proofs of what we have here stated; but, at present, we would confine ourselves to introducing to the notice of our readers one peculiarly eminent saint, of ancient times, in Ireland—St. Columbanus—whose character is one of deep and singular interest and importance in reviewing the ancient Church history of Ireland. Mr. Carew, the Maynooth Church Historian, represents St. Columbanus (as, in truth, he was) a model for Catholics. He was born in 539, or 559, of a respectable family, in Leinster (nearly 1,000 years before Luther), and from his early childhood was remarkable for applying to his studies with such diligence that he soon became a proficient in grammar, rhetoric, geometry, and the range of the Divine Scriptures. He also soon began to evince the strong influence of the latter in his heart; and finding that he was beset, when at home, by companions not calculated to promote his religious improvement, he left Leinster, and placed himself under the care of a venerable person, named Senile, Abbot of Cluaninis, in Lough Erne, who had a high reputation, among his countrymen at that time, for his singular piety and accomplishment in the study of the Sacred Scriptures. Columbanus made such good progress under the instruction of this holy man that, while yet a very young man, he wrote an exposition of the Book of Psalms, in elegant language, and composed many other pieces, profitable for communicating instruction. He subsequently became a missionary in France, and other parts of Europe, and exercised great influence over the Continental Church, by the great energy of his character, his intimacy with different kings, and the number, activity, and devotedness of his followers, and the eminence to which they attained.

We shall have occasion again to refer to this eminent individual, whom every pious student of Irish ecclesiastical history must always regard with veneration and love, even where he may find it needful to appeal from his views on certain points, to an authority more ancient and higher than he. St. Columbanus, among other good and noble qualities, was peculiarly distinguished by his honest love for Ireland, and the pride and pleasure with which, whether among Franks or Lombards, at Luxem, or at Bobio, he ever reverted to the soil which gave him birth. For the present we have, perhaps, said enough to interest our readers in his writings, and would begin, by introducing to them the translation of one of his Instructions, for which we are indebted to the valuable work of Mr. King, on the Church History of Ireland, 3rd vol., page 975.

ST. COLUMBANUS'S INSTRUCTION ON THE SUBJECT "OF JESUS CHRIST THE LIVING FOUNTAIN, AND OF COMING TO HIM FOR DRINK."—Given as INSTRUCTION XIII., p. 74, in FLEMING.

The preacher, though diffident of his abilities, must in faithfulness labour to the best of his

"Impressed with a strong sense of the misery of human life, as brought before us in the observations of every-day experience, and with solemn reverence, at the same time, for the Divine Oracles, we have been led to exhibit, in the discourses which you have already

power in the enforcement of Christian truth.

heard, however inelaborate their style, the best efforts, feeble though they be, of our humble ability; and however this way of talking on our part may haply appear superfluous in the eyes of others, yet to ourselves it seems appropriate enough that the discourse should begin with allusions of a personal nature, such as these. For it is not so much the indolence of others, as our own, that we are endeavouring to arouse. And, moreover, although to the perfect in wisdom these advances towards wisdom [which we are engaged in] may prove not entirely satisfactory, still for beginners, and poor, lukewarm creatures like ourselves, they must be regarded as unavoidable, and well adapted enough to our case. For what cannot be concealed, what cannot be kept silent, without doing harm, it is inexpedient to hide and inexpedient to hush. For this reason, therefore, it seemed to us better to speak, even in a homely style, than to observe silence. For we have judged it to be undoubtedly safer to employ our conversation on such topics as these, than on others that are either idle or frivolous.

Christ, the spring of living waters, how to be approached and applied by the believer.

"Lend, then, your ear once more, brethren, dearly beloved, to our observations, as [persons] convinced of the necessity of paying attention to the lessons which you hear [on such occasions as this]. And refresh your thirst, yet not so as to extinguish it, at the waters of this divine fountain, concerning which we are now desirous to speak. Drink, yet not so as to be satiated. For the living fountain, the fountain of life, now summons us to himself and says, S. John vii. 37. 'Whosoever is athirst let him come unto me and drink.' Observe what it is you are to drink. Let Isaiah inform you; let the Fountain himself inform you—'And they have forsaken me, the Fountain of living water, saith the Lord.' It is the Lord, then, himself, Jesus Christ, our God, that is the fountain of life, and he, therefore, invites us to himself, the Fountain, that we may drink. He drinks who loves him; he drinks who takes his fill of the Word of God; who has a perfect love for him, a perfect longing after him; he drinks who is inspired with a burning love for wisdom. Let us, Gentiles, then drink with eagerness from that [fountain] which the Jews forsook [For to us also, as well as to other Gentiles, may apply that saying about 'those who open not their mouths,' and we, too, may be exhorted to open the mouth of our inner man, to eat with anxious haste and S. John vi. 33. 'eagerly that bread which cometh down from heaven.']

In order, then, that we may eat of this bread—that we may drink of this fountain, [both of which are one and] the same Jesus Christ our Lord, (who speaks of himself as though he were to be used by us for food, [under the title of] the living bread, which giveth life to this world; and in like manner pointing to himself as the fountain, he saith, 'Whosoever is athirst, let him come unto me and drink,' concerning which fountain also the prophet saith, 'For with thee is the fountain of life.' See whence that fountain flows; for it is from the same source from which the bread also descends; because it is the same one who is the bread and the fountain, the only Son, our God, the Lord Christ, whom we ought unceasingly to hunger after; and although we are eating of him in loving him, although we devour him by our longing after him, yet let us continue our longing after him, as though hungry still. In like manner, that we may always drink of him, the Fountain, with exceeding pleasure, drink of him unceasingly in the full eagerness of our longing after him, and be delighted with his grateful sweetness (for the Lord is sweet and pleasant), though we do eat of him and drink, yet let us ever still hunger and thirst for him. For this our food and drink can never be entirely consumed nor exhausted; for although used, it is not spent; though drunk of, it doth not waste; because our bread is eternal, and our fountain is ever flowing, and ever sweet. Whence the prophet saith, 'Ho, ye that thirst, come to the Fountain.' For this fountain is for such as thirst, not for those who feel satiety; and therefore it is v. 6. that he invites to himself the hungry and thirsty, upon whom, elsewhere, he pronounced a blessing—who are never satisfied with drinking, but the more they have swallowed, the more thirsty will they be.

The preciousness of Christ to them that receive him. Col. ii. 3.

"What reason have we, brethren, to desire and seek after, and love unceasingly, that fountain of wisdom, the Word of God on high, 'in whom are hidden,' as the apostle saith, 'all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge,' [treasures] which he is inviting those that are thirsty to draw upon? Art thou thirsty? Drink [here] of the fountain of life. Art thou hungry? Eat [here] of the bread of life. Blessed are they that hunger for this bread, and thirst after this fountain. For, [though they be] always eating and drinking, yet retain they their desire to be eating and drinking still. For exceedingly delicious must be that food which is continually made use of for meat and drink, and yet is continually

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